

**February 28, 2023**

Samantha Burton

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Samantha Burton, and I am a registered voter in the City of Bridgeport. I am here to testify in regard to the governor's proposed budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

I am a member of Bridge House in Bridgeport. I have been a member of Bridge House since 2005. I've been a member at my clubhouse called Bridge House since 2005. Bridge House has been a very imperative part of my life towards my recovery. If it wasn't for Bridge House, I wouldn't have been able to get my driver's license for the first time. If it wasn't for bridge house I wouldn't be able to move in my first apartment for the first time if it wasn't for Bridge House I wouldn't be able to work the job that I'm at right now for the first time; and if it wasn't for Bridge House I especially would not be a newly published author that wrote a book and published it on Amazon on December 20th 2021, called "The Freedom of a Butterfly," a book of poetry and short stories on Amazon Kindle. Bridge House has helped me experience a world of possibilities; they taught me that nothing is impossible; they taught me that I can be anybody I want to be if I put my mind to it; they taught me how to believe in myself; they taught me how to believe in my dreams. Bridge House has never looked at my disability. They always looked at my ability. Without Bridge House I probably would have ended up dead somewhere.

So, it's very imperative that you increase funding to programs like Bridge House, because so many people's lives are depending on it. So many people will be lost without Bridge House—including myself. Bridge House helped me find my butterfly wings and I'm able to live my life to the fullest with hope in my eyes. So please consider increasing funding to these programs. Bridge House has changed minds and Bridge House has changed lives. Thank you for your time. God bless you.